

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

REPORT OF THE 49th ANNUAL CONFERENCE (1953)

held at

CONWAY HALL

RED LION SQUARE

LONDON.

on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 3rd, 4th and 5th

April 1953.

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LONDON, ON FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY, 3rd, 4th & 5th APRIL, 1953.

SESSIONS: 1st Day : 11.10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
2nd Day: 11.05 a.m. - 5 p.m.
3rd Day: 11.25 a.m. - 5.20 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:

Delegates present

Branches represented

1st Day.	67	25
Delegates from Glasgow (City) and Nottingham were permitted to sit without credentials. Kelvingrove was permitted to have the Branch voting taken 'in absentia'.		
Eccles, High Wycombe, Wickford and Kelvingrove were not represented.		
2nd Day.	60	26
Birmingham Branch was permitted to have its voting taken until after lunch		
Eccles, High Wycombe, Wickford and Kelvingrove were not represented.		
3rd Day.	60	26
Eccles, High Wycombe, Wickford and Kelvingrove were not represented.		
CHAIRMAN:	R. Ambridge	
VICE-CHAIRMAN:	E. Guy	
TELLERS:	F. Lawrence, J. Lestor and R. Vicary.	

REPORT OF THE 49TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: | No Action. |
| 2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ATTENDANCES: | No Action. |
| 3. BRANCHES, MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANISATION: | |

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| (a) Branches. | No action. |
| (b) Membership | No action. |
| (c) Central Branch | |
| (i) Membership | |
| (ii) Finance | No action. |

Bloomsbury. (Kersley) stated that something should be done regarding the proper collection of dues from the Central Branch membership.

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|---------------------------|------------|
| (iii) Members in arrears. | No action. |
|---------------------------|------------|

- (d) Groups.

Ealing. The Branch asked for information as to whether a Group Secretary was not operating.

Central Organiser reported that two Group Secretaries had been appointed recently and were now operating.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| (e) Ballot procedure: Ballot by post. | No action. |
| (f) Party polls and written statements. | No action. |
| (g) Party polls and special meetings. | |

Resolution - Ealing (Hampson - Warnecke)

"That the E.C. be recommended to instruct all branches submitting resolutions to the E.C. in future to give full details of voting, attendance, etc."

Carried nem. con.

Hampson stated that the branch considered it absolutely essential for this to be done in the future, in a recent Party Poll it was discovered that of the six branches requesting the Poll, only one had given its voting and attendance. When the information was finally received from the branches concerned, it transpired that the Party had taken a Poll at the request of 38 members FOR and 2 AGAINST.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| (h) History of the Party and Companion Parties. | No action. |
| (i) Internal Party Journal. | |

Warnecke (Ealing), asked whether the cost of producing 'Forum' had increased, and whether the E.C. would investigate possible economies for the production of the journal.

Resolution - S.W. London (Kirk - Phillips)

"That in the opinion of this Conference, the price of 'Forum' should be raised to 7d. per copy to avoid the Party Funds being used for its subsidy".

Lost by a large majority.

Amendment - St. Pancras (Moss - Heelas)

"To delete the phrase 'should be 7d. per copy' and insert 'and the price be adjusted if necessary to cover the cost of production'

Lost 16 - 34.

Kirk (S.W. London). Whilst the journal was useful, nevertheless it was not an essential part of Party propaganda and the Party should not, therefore, be required to subsidise it.
 Lee (Manchester). We could not keep changing the price; it would be better to keep a round price, and Party members should make a special effort to sell all copies printed in order to avoid any loss.
 McGregor (S.W. London). He was opposed to the amendment as the Party would not know where it stood if the price fluctuated. It was essential that we should know what income was due assuming that all those copies printed were sold.
 Flitter (Fulham). No resolution was necessary. If 'Forum' was losing money, the Treasurer would bring this to the attention of the E.C. We did not know what the position would be in the future regarding printing costs etc., and it should be left to the discretion of the E.C.

Standing Orders Committee read a letter from Kelvingrove Branch stating that they could not send delegates to Conference, but had sent a record of their voting and hoped it would be accepted and recorded.

Resolution - Flitter (Fulham) - Cosham (Camberwell)

"That Kelvingrove's request be acceded to". Carried 30 - 28.

Lee (Manchester). Thought this was unwise. In future other branches might follow this precedent.

Warnecke (Ealing). Conference was for delegates to discuss and confer; how could Kelvingrove do this?

McDowell (Lewisham) thought this was not a good precedent to adopt; branches should make the effort to send delegates.

(i) Internal Party Journal (cont'd)

Moss (St. Pancras). Since the production of 'Forum', the work of the Propaganda Research Committee had stopped. He asked why the E.C. had done this.

Hart (Islington). It had not been a question of the E.C. dissolving the Propaganda Research Committee, but the material coming in had greatly reduced, and the members on the Committee had ceased to function.

(j) Premises. No action.

(k) Library. No action.

(l) Membership of the Armed Forces. No action.

(m) Conference: Special Branch Meetings. No action.

(n) Conference and Delegate Meetings - procedure. No action.

(o) Conference & delegate meetings - E.C. attendances etc. No action.

(p) Delegate meeting: date.

Resolution - S.W. London (Kirk - McGregor)

"That in view of the serious financial position of the Party the E.C. be recommended to give earnest consideration to the hiring of a hall, cheaper than Conway Hall, for Conference meetings. Also consideration be given to either hiring a cheaper hall, or using Head Office for delegate meetings". Lost by a large majority.

(q) Central Organiser's Report. No action.

4. PROPAGANDA.

(a) Provincial Propaganda.

Resolution - Manchester.

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to arrange a propaganda tour of the provinces for a period of three months in the summer viz. June, July and August, calling upon provincial branches to assist". Carried 54 - 22.

Amendment (S.W. London).

"Delete the words 'of three months'". Lost 45 - 43.

Addendum (Camberwell)

"Add 'provided hospitality can be given to the speakers'".

Lost 8 - 84.

McDowell (Lewisham) challenged Conference procedure in that he considered that some branches were being allowed to vote above their strength of membership.

Ambridge (Chair) asked Ealing Branch to send a delegate away from the table.

Lawrence (Standing Orders Committee). The branches were represented according to figures he had received from Head Office.

Local Organiser - According to the Form 'C' the branch was in order. On December 1952 membership had fluctuated but at present 6 delegates from Ealing was correct.

The delegate was allowed to remain at the table.

(a) Provincial Propaganda (cont'd).

Resolution - (Manchester)

"That this Party being a political party should revise its propaganda to meet present needs and conditions".

Resolution - Flitter (Fulham) Snelgrove (Brighton).

"No action". Agreed.

Resolution - (St. Pancras).

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to organise a provincial propaganda tour on the lines laid down by the Annual Conference 1951 and 1952." Carried 53 - 10.

Item for discussion (C).

Islington Branch "May Day Rally in Trafalgar Square in 1954".

Courtney (Islington). Islington Branch thought it a good idea. We could make a big show with banners, loud-speakers etc., and Trafalgar Square is exclusive.

Item for discussion (D).

Paddington Branch - "Is our approach to propaganda sufficiently constructive."

May (Paddington). considered that our propaganda had been, so far, of a 'chopping block' nature. We could be more sympathetic to other's points of view - we have been too busy demolishing and too little constructive. We have made people antagonistic where they should be more attentive. On the question of 'Socialism', people are more interested in what it will be like, but we do not answer the questions, but fob the questioner off. It does not mean that by talking about Socialism we are predicting.

Lake (E.C.). The Declaration of Principles keeps our propaganda on the rails - they are wide enough for socialists to expand, and narrow enough to allow non-socialists to understand, they keep to fundamentals. There will be problems on the dawn of Socialism. We should deal with those problems. Capitalism is producing more and more problems; we can only make generalisations. Capitalism has subjected Man to the machine. McDowall (Lewisham). The other speakers had not dealt with specific cases. When answering questions, speakers should give an answer that not only satisfies themselves but the audience also. Forums and discussions will help us to do this.

Snelgrove (Brighton) asked what Paddington Branch meant by 'constructive' Kersley (Bloomsbury). said that the Party should take note of what Com. May had said.

Young (Hampstead) asked what is meant by 'the positive side'.

MacGregor (S.W. London). Paddington Branch should put its point of view in black and white, they should draft a circular on what they thought the party's attitude should be.

Robertson (Brighton). The party's case was destructive and constructive at the same time. Questions from the audience revealed that they understood Socialism but not Capitalism.

Flitter (Fulham) said that there was a need for cohesion amongst propagandists.

Lee (Manchester). We cannot tell what Capitalism will be like in ten years time. How could we predict what Socialism will be like, when we did not know for sure ourselves. We could say what it won't be like.

Turner (Paddington) asked what of the speakers answering questions - there is a wide divergence of opinion in the Party, what definite line should he take. People want to know what will happen under Socialism, how things will be produced and distributed, and what we mean by 'democratic control'. It is our fault - people know that we are opposed to Capitalism and in favour of Socialism but no more than that. The differences of opinion should be brought out into the open. Since 1906 the Party has published no literature on the subject of Socialism, there was brief chapter in one pamphlet only.

Snelgrove (Brighton) challenged Turner to elaborate on the lack of mention of Socialism in Party literature.

Groves (E.C.) agreed with Turner and said that we could not have speakers on the platform with differing points of view.

McLaughlin (S.W. London). Our problem is to convince the working-class that the root of their troubles is Capitalism. The pamphlets do not go into details of Socialism, but they make clear the work that has to be done prior to its establishment.

Young (Hampstead) appreciated the fact that we should not be antagonistic and destructive, but we must be scientific and stick to matters that are demonstrable.

Waters (Paddington). Socialism is an idea based upon the analysis of Capitalism and we should put a positive case and not merely a destructive one.

G. Kerr (West Ham). The Party was being forced by present day questions into describing what Socialism will be like.

McClatchie (Bloomsbury). The old members' ideas were no longer held by present members. We must explain when an audience asks about Socialism.

Read (Hackney) considered that members feel that the Party is not integrated with the working-class movement. What we can do is to prosecute the class-struggle.

May (Paddington) in winding-up said that the discussion had shown that the Party needs to do something about this aspect of its propaganda.

5. FINANCE.

General Fund.

Resolution - (Hampson - Warnecke (Ealing)).

"That the E.C. be recommended to investigate the apparent deficit between the amount of dues given in the financial statement and the amount that should have been received if the membership had paid its dues in full." Carried nem. con.

Warnecke (Ealing). According to the Financial Statement it appeared that almost one third of the dues were not paid. It might be advisable for the E.C. to appoint some kind of Committee to see that branches bought their full quantity of dues stamps. The deficit was at present in the region of £140 per annum.

Offord (Bloomsbury). When some members were lapsed, they left the Party owing more than 13 weeks dues.

Trotman (S.W. London). It was difficult because in cases where dues were waived, branch treasurers may accumulate a stock of dues stamps in hand and would not buy so many for the following period.

Bryan (ex-E.C.). She had compiled statistics from Forms 'C' and about £50 worth of dues were waived during the year which would account for part of the deficit.

Phillips (S.W. London) queried the item of £37.11.3d. for Publicity expenses.

E. Lake (Treasurer) reported that this had been used for advertising Party literature.

Parliamentary Fund.

No action.

New Premises.

Resolution - (St. Pancras).

"That in view of the unexpectedly high cost of running Head Office, this Conference instructs the E.C. to examine the possibilities of renting suitable accommodation and selling 52 Clapham High Street. This Conference is further convinced that the Party's assets should be used for propaganda purposes i.e. written propaganda, provincial tours and electoral activity." Lost 8 - 67.

Amendment - (Islington).

"Delete all after '52 Clapham High Street.'" Lost 13 - 61.

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"Insert after 'suitable accommodation' the words 'or purchasing premises less costly to run'." Lost 16 - 58.

Amendment - (Lewisham).

"That in view of the high cost of maintaining Head Office, this Conference instructs the E.C. to investigate the possibility of selling 52 Clapham High Street and acquiring (by purchase or rental) premises more suitable to our needs." Lost 26 - 51.

McDowall (Lewisham). Our reasons for leaving Rugby Chambers had been increased rent and dilapidations. An initial enthusiasm had existed at the beginning when the new premises were purchased, but since then this enthusiasm had dwindled, and Head Office was being used less and less. What we needed were smaller premises more suited to the Party needs. If smaller premises could be rented or purchased the balance of the money could be used for propaganda purposes.

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Premises (cont'd).

Riley (Bloomsbury). There's nothing wrong with the premises, the trouble lay in the fact that we did not use them as we should. The Sunday meetings that had been held there were not advertised by posters etc., and we should, in the summer months, open up Head Office for public meetings every Sunday evening. He considered that we could not get premises as good as Head Office anywhere else.

Moss (St. Pancras). His branch were opposed to the amendment because it laid open the possibility of purchasing further premises. Other premises were available for renting in London, and he considered that whatever money the Party had should be used for propaganda purposes. Head Office was becoming a burden to the Party.

Heelas (St. Pancras). He had made a few enquiries about premises for renting in and around Marble Arch area, and the position was not as difficult as had been made out.

Offord (Bloomsbury). said it was true property may be available, but when landlords knew of the S.P.G.B. they were not keen at all to do business.

Howard (Bloomsbury). The Party should stop bickering on this whole question. We at last had premises of our own, and it was time Party members made a special effort to do some useful work for the Party.

D'Arcy (St. Pancras). If members thought that the landlords were opposed to letting premises to the Party they were entirely wrong. The important thing was that the Party propaganda commitments had suffered as a result of purchasing Head Office and maintaining it.

Heelas (St. Pancras). The landlords had had method not put up any opposition to the Party as tenants. It was true that wherever the Party carried out its work we would have to bear expenses for lighting, heating, rates etc., but with 52 Clapham High Street, not only was this the case but quite a large sum of Party money was locked up in the premises.

4. PROPAGANDA.

(b) London: Indoor meetings.Resolution - St. Pancras (Heelas - Moss).

"That this Conference urges the E.C. to hold large indoor meetings at regular three-monthly intervals in 1953, in addition to any debate that may be arranged by branches." Carried 32 - 10.

Heelas (St. Pancras). Large indoor meetings had been a successful form of activity in the past and holding them at regular intervals was a good form of propaganda.

(c) Outdoor meetings: new speakers.

No action.

(d) Outdoor Propaganda: Speakers passing test.

No action.

(e) Development of Stations.

No action.

(f) Head Office Forums.

No action.

(g) Statistics.

Critchfield (Ealing). No record had been made of a debate held by the branch with P.F.U. at Hammersmith Town Hall in October 1952.

St. Pancras. That no statistics at all were included for the Nottingham meetings, although a large number had been held.

Howard (ex-Propaganda Committee). It was very unfortunate that these details had been omitted, but the statistics had been carefully compiled by a comrade of the Committee, and it could only be assumed that the Forms 'E' for these meetings had not been sent or received.

Dale (Ealing). The Form 'E' had been sent for the debate in question; the branch were particularly careful on this question of forwarding Forms 'E' to Head Office.

5. EDUCATION.

Critchfield (Ealing) asked if the tutor of the Speakers' class was not able to attend the classes, as this had not been the case previously. Turner (Speakers' class tutor). He was now running a Speakers' class, but the trouble was not that the tutor did not turn up but that the class had no pupils. There was a tendency among speakers of the Party, once they had passed the test, to consider they had nothing further to learn, and they never came to the classes.

Young (Hampstead) asked why the series of discussions 'on the real meaning of the Party's object to show what this means in real life' had failed. Wilmot (Education Committee). It was to be regretted that there is no response from members for any of these classes, whatever the subject. The Education classes had been a dismal failure, and whilst the distance of Head Office may have some small bearing on the fact that members did not attend, it appeared that a large number are just not interested.

also have shown that the E.C. were quite in error.

Hampson (Writers' Class). wished to record that the Writers' class had been a success, and regular weekly meetings had been held.
 Kersley (Bloomsbury). He considered that the best time to run classes was on Sunday afternoons as more members are able to get to them.
 Young (Hampstead). We should confine our classes to the specific needs of Socialist propaganda - taking in too wide a field put unnecessary strain on the tutor. Tutor could travel to students, not vice versa. Or the Party might run two classes, one North and South of the Thames. The L.C.C. classes gave a lot of information.
 Warnecke (Ealing). The main fault with regard to the classes was the lateness in starting.
 Courtney (Islington). Often there was no tutor at Speakers' class and that Sunday was not the best day to run them.
 Hampson (Ealing) asked what stage the Speakers' class had reached.
 Hardy (Education Committee) stated that perhaps the economics class had been too ambitious, but it would be better to run the classes at Head Office.

Offord (Bloomsbury). Wider publicity would get a better attendance at classes; better organisation would get the members in.
 McDowall (Lewisham) held that members did not want knowledge for its own sake, but needed it for putting it to a practical propaganda purpose. Tutors should go to the branches.

Turner (Speakers' class). Established speakers never attended the speakers' classes, if they did, new members would be helped considerably. These speakers think that they have very little more to learn from the point of view of attending classes. The knowledge that the Party possesses should be at the disposal of all members, and speakers can help. The class was not ambitious but a necessity.

Kersley (Bloomsbury). The best way to train speakers was to get them up on the platform as soon as possible.
 Coster (E.C.) said that Head Office was a long way away for many members living in North London. He once ran a series of classes and was prepared to consider doing it again if they can be organised. Decentralisation of the classes would help members to avail themselves of information.

Wilmot (Education Committee). He did not accept most of the reasons why the economics classes had failed. He denied that there had not been any organisation; he had circularised the branches many times. It was true that at first some tutors had had other commitments, nevertheless, there had been a complete lack of response on the part of the membership, if they were not sufficiently interested in coming to H.O. to learn, they would not go to the L.C.C. or anywhere else. No amount of organisation had overcome the apathy of members; it would be difficult to get local classes going.

6. LITERATURE.

Resolution - (Bloomsbury).

"That this Conference regrets that no new pamphlets or leaflets were published during 1952 on the grounds of the lack of finance, despite the fact that manuscripts were available. The Conference is of the opinion that the E.C. should have made an appeal for the necessary funds and instructs the 50th E.C. to arrange for the publication of the material ready without any further delay."

Carried 48 - 22.

Kersley (Bloomsbury) There should be more appeals for funds to enable the Party to produce more literature.

McDowall (Lewisham) asked whether it was merely a matter of the lack of funds, and were there any manuscripts to produce even if the money was available.

Hardy (Editorial Committee). There was a part of a pamphlet and some matter left over from 'Questions of the Day'.

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Lawrence (Standing Orders Committee) reported that Birmingham Branch had requested that as the branch would not be represented until after lunch, their voting would be recorded.

Resolution - Flitter (Fulham) - Taylor (Croydon).

"That the request be acceded to." Carried 41 - 4.

Warnecke (Ealing) protested that this was not the correct procedure for Conference to adopt.

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Waters (Chair) pointed out the difficulty, as Kelvingrove were already allowed to do so.
Waters (Paddington). If anything, Birmingham had a more legitimate claim to vote 'in absentia' than Kelvingrove, because their delegates were, at least, on the way.

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6. LITERATURE (cont'd). Resolution (Paddington).

"That this Conference is of the opinion that the literature of the Party, namely the Socialist Standard and pamphlets, are inadequate from the point of view of explaining to people what we mean by Socialism and how it would be established in more detail and explanatory form and instructs the E.C. to make the arrangements for the publication of articles and short pamphlets dealing with the nature of Socialism and its establishment, and the various arguments put by the public against these ideas." Lost 24 - 54.

Waters (Paddington). Our literature should contain material more along the lines of the questions the Party now receives, 'Who will do the dirty work' 'Human Nature' etc. Our literature does not deal with these questions.

Lee (Manchester). The idea was nonsense and poppycock, the resolution was pious, and the Party should stick to basic points and not discuss generalisations.

Flitter (Fulham). The resolution does cover the idea of pamphlets on 'Dirty work', 'Human Nature', but not what Socialism will be like.

Kersley (Bloomsbury) hoped that Conference would carry the resolution and that Paddington should put their ideas in black and white.

Courtney (Islington) said that it was pious to ask the E.C. to start on this publication; the pamphlets should be written first.

Kirk (S.W. London). The resolution was pious; nobody can say what Socialism will be like.

Young (Hampstead). This practice if adopted would be a departure from our usual method. We would be chasing peoples' ideas no matter how fantastic. It was incumbent on Paddington Branch to show the rest of the Party precisely what they mean. Our case was in the nature of a long term one, and if there were alterations to be made then we had plenty of time.

Baldwin (Camberwell). Our present pamphlets did their job. We had to deal with capitalism. Our problem was to get out and sell our literature.

Turner (E.C.). At present we do chase peoples' ideas, he read off several titles of the pamphlets 'Family Allowances', 'Nationalisation' etc., and said that there was very little in the pamphlets about Socialism, except in the pamphlet 'Socialism' itself where there was a short chapter at the end which was far from adequate. What was to prevent the Party from printing 2d. or 3d. booklets on 'How Socialism will be established' and 'Backward Countries' etc.

Waters (Paddington) in winding up said that it was nonsense to say that it is unscientific to condition the literature to the questions we received, our pamphlets already do this. There is no pamphlet describing Socialism; it was not good enough to quote from our 'Object', and it is not scientific to tell people what Socialism won't be like.

3. ORGANISATION.

Amendments to Rules.

Resolution - Hampson (Ealing) - Waters (Paddington).

"That the consideration of Amendments to Rules be deferred until Sunday morning." Carried 25 - 10.

6. LITERATURE (cont'd).

Resolution - Fulham (Flitter - R. Turner).

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to investigate the possibility of producing a pamphlet on 'Human Nature'".

Carried 40 - 7.

Flitter (Fulham) stated that a manuscript had been produced by a member.

(iii) Leaflet: 'Introducing the S.P.G.B.'

Goodman (St. Pancras) asked when we could expect to have this leaflet.

Hardy (Editorial Committee) replied that the leaflet would be ready when somebody cared to write it.

Resolution - (St. Pancras)

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to publish 'Questions of the Day' immediately."

As this pamphlet had already gone to print, it was 'Agreed' to move on to 'Next business'.

Resolution - (St. Pancras - Goodman - Callomon).

"That this Conference recommends that the 'S.S.' be sold to branches at the full retail price, thus obviating the loss to Head Office. Lost by a large majority."

Callomon (St. Pancras). The loss to Head Office would be ended if the branches would buy their copies of the 'S.S.' at the full price. As it was the Branches made a profit on its sale, when Head Office needed all the money to meet other commitments.

Kirk (S.W. London) asked what difference did it make as to who had the money; the Party as a whole held the money and the loss affected everyone. Lee (Manchester). If the branches had to pay the full price, the tendency would be to reduce orders from Head Office and so make the loss greater. Moreover, individual buyers of small stocks would have to suffer a loss which under present conditions did not occur or was very slight.

Resolution - (St. Pancras).

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to investigate the possibility of publishing a Socialist weekly." Lost 17 - 58.

Amendment - (Islington).

"Delete 'weekly' and insert 'fortnightly'." Lost 9 - 66.

George (Bloomsbury) considered that the whole question of weekly or fortnightly 'S.S.' was pious at present. It was asking other people to do the work. The Party cannot cope with a proposition like this. It did not have the necessary equipment.

Groves (E.C.). It had been worked out, the paper would pay for a paid editor.

Callomon (St. Pancras) held that the paper would have more appeal for the public, moreover, the necessity of getting it out on sale more frequently would make for more Party writers.

7. PUBLICITY. No action.8. ELECTORAL ACTIVITY.Resolution - (Hampstead).

"That this Conference instructs the E.C. to contest the next General Election." Carried 54 - 19.

Amendment - (Kelvingrove).

"Add 'provided that the necessary funds be drawn only from the Parliamentary Fund'." Lost 2 - 76.

Resolution - (St. Pancras).

"That this Conference re-affirms the decision of the 1952 Annual Conference relating to Electoral Activity and instructs the E.C. to prepare immediately to contest the next General Election."

Carried 53 - 24.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A letter of fraternal greetings from an ex-member, Joyce Millen, was read to the delegates, in which she stated that since arriving in Lagos, Nigeria, she had managed to form a discussion group of twelve people. They were 'extremely interested and opposed to Nationalism' and hated dictatorship, which made it easier for her to build a 'positive case for Socialism'. They held regular weekly meetings.

Resolution - McDowall (Lewisham) - Kersley (Bloomsbury).

"That fraternal greetings of this Conference be sent to the Companion Parties, also to Joyce Millen and Com; Frank in Austria." Agreed.

8. ELECTORAL ACTIVITY (cont'd).By-Election: North Paddington.Resolution - Paddington (May - Waters).

"That this Conference is of the opinion that the Party should contest Paddington North in the event of a by-election."

Carried 33 - 23.

The General Secretary read the appropriate resolutions from the E.C. minutes of the 8th meeting, 1953, which stated that the E.C. had decided not to contest the Paddington North by-election on financial grounds. May (Paddington). The resolution had been tabled in order to give a direction to the E.C. Palmers Green. The branch was not opposed to contesting the by-election if Paddington Branch could show what activity it had undertaken in the meantime.

(Manchester) asked what work Paddington Branch had done also. He considered it was cheek and impudence on the part of a branch to decide to contest a by-election and expect the other branches to foot the bill.

Man (St. Pancras). The party funds were for propaganda purposes, and as such we should use them in the by-election.

Waters (Paddington). A by-election is a great help to propaganda because because attention was focused on it from everywhere. It was irrelevant to give particulars of the work put into the constituency.

Barrie (Bloomsbury). This was not an argument about electoral action in general, but for a particular type of activity. No branch could decide to contest on its own. The Conference should decide the matter.

Mirk (S.W. London). The country wide interest is less in by-elections. It was more important to show how much work had been done.

No winding-up notes taken.

11. THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE PARTY.

Item for discussion 'G'

Paddington Branch "The Party's work, its organisation and results."

May (Paddington) considered that the Party had been subject to a spell of apathy, and that seeing that the unit of the Party is the branch, it was probably there that the reason for the apathy lay. The branch rooms should be made attractive centres, there was no unison between branch organisers. Branch meetings largely occur on the same nights, therefore discussions are confined to the separate branches. The E.C. report to Conference points to the lack of activity, it may be the same story this year.

Flitter (Fulham). If the members would not attend their branches or co-operate generally, there was nothing that the branch organisers could do about it.

Hampson (Baling) outlined the schemes that his branch had put into practice. He said that the branch membership was scattered over a wide area making it necessary to hold lively branch meetings in order to keep members' interest. They had a rota of chairmen, organised canvassing drives and held discussions etc. They usually got good attendances at the branch because of this.

Kersley (Bloomsbury). Head Office was not put to proper use; the back door was open but the front door was shut. There should always be some activity going on there - it should be opened up to the public. Sunday meetings should be a regular feature.

Jarvis (Croydon). The main reason of the failure of H.O. was that meeting never started to time, nor did they start to time elsewhere. Members who travelled a long way to meetings had to return home when the discussion got going and therefore, did not feel it was worth while attending.

Courtney (Islington). The apathy was a reflection of following of prominent members. If a well-known member was not present other members would not take an interest in the activity. New members should be given a job immediately.

George (Bloomsbury). We did not do anything to stimulate reticent members. We should appeal for funds correctly; give these members a good reason for increased activity.

Berry (Kingston). New members should be made active right away. His branch's membership was small but very active. They held forums and discussions and there was no lack of interest.

Courtney (Islington). The branches were the places to get at; more activity in the branches would result in more speakers and writers.

Moss (St. Pancras). There had been too much discussion between members and too many forums, Internal Party Journal etc., which made for the lack of enthusiasm and less active work.

Ivimey F. (Hackney) saw no point in the Forms 'E'; why should lit. sales be included in them?

Waters (Paddington). A new idea of working was required. There ought to be more co-ordination between branches. Branches should concentrate on fewer and better meetings; greater regional efforts should be made and branches should do more organising for themselves and not leave it to the Propaganda Committee.

McDowall (Lewisham). All the methods mentioned had been tried before. We should look for the reason why less meetings were successful - they used to be good. Instead of complaining, branches should demonstrate by setting an example.

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The first of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

The second of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

The third of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

The fourth of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

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The sixth of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

The seventh of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought. The weather was very hot, and the crops were much injured by the drought.

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The tenth of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain. The weather was very cold, and the crops were much injured by the rain.

(Bloomsbury) asked the reason for this amendment.
 (S.W. London) replied that many members were on holiday and the
 was poor as a result. Members liked to attend Delegate Meeting
 this gives them the opportunity.

Rule 22. Resolution - (Fulham).

"That in accordance with the recommendations of the September
 Delegate Meeting, Rule 22 be amended to read as follows 'Each
 branch shall be entitled to send three delegates to the Annual
 Conference irrespective of the size of the Branch. Delegates shall
 not vote except in matters of extreme urgency, but shall take note
 of the proceedings. The E.C. shall then circulate to all the
 Branches a report of the Conference discussions within one month
 of the said Conference, together with a ballot paper containing
 all the Resolutions and amendments which shall be voted on at a
 special meeting to be held by the Branch.'" Lost 35 - 45.

Amendment - (Fulham).

"That the words on line 10 reading 'within one month of' be deleted
 and the words 'not later than two months after' be inserted."
Lost 19 - 61.

Amendment - (Palmer's Green).

"Add after 'special meeting to be held by each Branch' the words
 'within six weeks of the said Conference'." Lost 23 - 57.

Amendment - (Palmer's Green).

"Delete 'Delegates shall not vote except in matters of extreme
 urgency' and insert 'Delegates shall have no voting power on
 matters arising from the agenda'." Lost 34 - 46.

Amendment - (S.W. London).

"Delete 'except in cases of extreme urgency'." Lost 18 - 65.

Amendment - (Glasgow).

"That the sentence 'Each branch shall be entitled to send three
 Delegates to the Annual Conference irrespective of the size of
 the branch' be deleted and the first sentence in the present Rule
 i.e. 'Each branch shall be entitled to send two Delegates for the
 first 20 members or under, and one additional Delegate for every
 further 10 members' be inserted." Lost 28 - 55.

Flitter - (Fulham). The matter had appeared on Conference Agendas
 previously - explanation by Fulham Branch had been circulated to branches,
 and asked delegates to give reasons for opposition to the proposal.
Warnecke (Ealing). Opposed - proposition unwieldy, working of resolution
 vague - extreme urgency not defined. Could have been made simpler.
McDowall (Lewisham). Opposed to change of Conference procedure, method
 at present employed is a simple and satisfactory one. Delegates will be
 writing rather than speaking, reports will be coloured.
Vicary (Central). Verbatim report, edited by Executive Committee
 implemented by delegates; these three things would be necessary, and
 nearly impossible.

Kersley (Bloomsbury) considered it not practical from a clerical point
 of view at present.

Flitter - (Fulham). Winding up the discussion said that everyone knows
 what 'extreme urgency' is, why doubt the delegates' veracity. War
 declaration, Spanish war, premises, are examples of 'extreme urgency'.
 Branches find difficulty in obtaining delegates - this would stimulate
 delegates' interest, delegates do not take notes now to discuss any new
 ideas arising at Conference, if delegates can give accurate pictures of
 their branches' points of view then they can equally take back accurate
 reports. The argument of clerical difficulties does not apply to this
 proposal any more than to any other proposition.

Rule 26. Brighton and Islington.

"Delete in line four the word 'six and insert 'nine'." Lost 10 - 67.

Resolution - (Ealing).

"Delete the words 'by six or more branches sending in a requisition
 stating the matter upon which the poll is desired' and insert 'by
 a minimum of one third of the branches sending in a requisition
 stating the matter upon which the poll is desired. In the last case
 the total number of branches (excluding Central Branch) in the

also have shown that the E.C. were quite in error.

Party on the 1st January of the current year will be the basis for calculation, rounded up where necessary to the highest number divisible by three." Lost 26 - 57.

Amendment - (Pulham).

"After 'one third of the branches' insert the words 'at the Party'." Lost 26 - 57.

Amendment - (Hamstead).

"Delete in line four the word 'six' and insert 'twenty'." Lost 4 - 79.

Resolution - (St. Pancras).

"That the rule be amended by inserting at line six after the word 'assisted' the following - 'provided that an instruction decision on such matter has not been given by the previous Annual Conference'." Lost 17 - 66.

12. MISCELLANEOUS.

Resolution - (Fulham).

"That the name of the Party be changed to 'World Socialist Party (Great Britain)'." Lost 6 - 73.

Flitter (Fulham). The present name of the Party caused some embarrassment and was a source of confusion with the Labour Party. The name had a national twist, whereas it should make itself and its position clear as did the American companion party. Kersley (Bloombury). The Party had to decide this issue long ago. It was thoroughly discussed and the result was the present title and reasons for rejecting the alternative titles have not changed. Webb (Hamstead) was not satisfied with Kersley's explanation and stated that he would like to know more about it. Lee (Manchester). The name was not important - if there was any confusion in workers' minds, it was because they did not listen to the case.

Resolution - St. Pancras).

"That nominations for Party posts shall be forwarded to the General Secretary who will obtain the consent of the nominees." Lost 24 - 53.

Healas (St. Pancras) It would save time and effort on the parts of many people obtaining the consent of one person. It would not mean more work for the General Secretary - the job could be given to another person to obtain the consent of nominees.

13. OVERSEAS ORGANISATIONS.

Hassett (S.W. London) It was not clear from the E.C. Report whether the Overseas Secretary had not reported or whether he had nothing to report. Ambridge (Chair) read a report from the Overseas Secretary which stated that although the report was late in arriving, there was very little information to hand. Apart from a regular exchange of Minutes, the Companion Parties had exchanged hardly any correspondence with the S.P.G.B. Correspondence with individuals abroad had fallen off considerably. Attempts to keep in touch with Groups in Germany and Holland had failed for the lack of replies. Of the ex-Party members who had gone abroad during the year, only one had contacted the Party and was now linked up with a Companion Party. Comrade W. Waters (Overseas Secretary) was present and confirmed what he had written.

Hassett (S.W. London). This report should have been available for inclusion in the E.C. Report; what had been said could have been said two months ago.

14. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(A) Manchester.

"The Party's attitude towards the Trade Unions with regard to present conditions".

Lee (Manchester). He did not know why the member of his branch had put this item on the Agenda; since doing so, he had not turned up at the Branch. Therefore he (Lee) did not feel inclined to open up the discussion but asked that he might join in later on, if necessary; he had been given a free hand.

win (Camberwell) deprecated the attitude of a branch in putting an extra outlet for our ideas and we needed outlets as the usual ones were becoming more limited. We have no mention in the press or the B.B.C. field that we so far had not entered. T.U. branches were a ready should not ignore. We should make the 'S.S.' as well known in T.U. branches as the Daily Worker.

Critchfield (Ealing). His branch had tried to get a hearing in the T.U. branches and had found a general opposition of the kind we found elsewhere. The results had been disappointing.

Ivimey (Hackney). asked how many T.U. branches had been circulated; Baldwin replied "two".

Dearden (Islington). The idea was worth while, but members of the Party in the T.U. needed support. If there were several Party members present in T.U. branches they would give more weight to Socialist ideas. Edmonds (Lewisham). We have a better chance of putting over Socialist ideas at our ordinary meetings than in the T.U. branches. The T.U.'s are interested only in working conditions, wages etc., and not in establishing Socialism. Some comrades have little experience of propagating in T.U. branches. They would find it heart-breaking.

Kersley (Bloomsbury) asked what was meant by 'present conditions'. The Party had a traditional view of T.U.'s and the conditions were not changed. If they had changed, it was up to Manchester to show how.

Grant (St. Pancras). His Union did not allow political discussion unless the political levy had been paid, and that meant no political discussion for members of the S.P.G.B. as they always 'contracted out'.

Waters (Paddington). The Party's attitude to the T.U.'s is the same as it always was.

Trotman (E.C.). Members seemed to think that our attitude to the T.U. branch meetings was to use them for propaganda purposes; this was incorrect. T.U. members attended their branches to discuss their trade conditions. In any case, S.P.G.B. members whenever and wherever the opportunity arose, which was very rare, did put the Party's case to the best of their ability.

Plitter (Fulham). The title of the item for discussion had been badly framed. It should have asked whether the Party's attitude to the T.U.'s had changed. The answer was that it had not.

Lee (Manchester) in winding up said that he still did not know why the item had been put on the Agenda, he could only conclude that the mover had intended that we should start a 'boring from within' movement.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(B) S.W. London.

"That the attitude of the E.C. to the I.L.P.'s request for joint action in petitioning the B.B.C. be discussed."

Ambridge (Chair) read the relevant Minutes of the E.C. 49/36/10 and the correspondence that passed between the branch and the E.C.

Hassett (S.W. London). The E.C. had dismissed the matter out of hand. The proposition was not discussed. The lengthy reply to S.W. London by the E.C. did not deal with the point at issue. The branch had asked what the underlying reasons were. They recognised the dangers of compromise, but there was no difference between putting our point of view over the air and a debate. It was an opportunity to broadcast the case. The I.L.P. had got permission and were now better placed to oppose us.

Kersley (Bloomsbury). It seemed all right on the surface; but we do not need joint action - the second step of political lobbying.

Lee (Manchester) stated that it was doubtful that we would have got permission and now that the precedent had been established, perhaps we stood a better chance of getting our case over the radio.

Warnecke (Ealing). The E.C.'s action was correct; to have done otherwise would have jeopardized the Party's independence.

May (Paddington) asked S.W. London what their attitude would have been if it had not been the I.L.P. but the Fascist Party making the request.

McLaughlin (E.C.). Even if we had obtained permission, what value would it be? What would the B.B.C. allow us to say? They would apply all sorts of restrictions on us.

Coster (E.C.). The I.L.P. made the approach to us because they wanted our collaboration. Other parties do this also. They realise the assistance is valuable publicity. Do we not use debates with other parties for this purpose? That is why we are often refused. It was not true to say that this broadcast was the result of their petition. It was their anniversary and it could be a concession. If we created the precedent the door would be open, even if this were a special case it should not be allowed.

Trotman (E.C.). The E.C. had not shown where the 'Hostility' Clause (7) could be applied in this instance. The Clause was simply a statement to say that we will have nothing to do with political bargaining or water down our policy. What would a Socialist Party M.P. do if he were faced with having to vote against a particular motion in the House of Commons - should he abstain because it meant voting with political opponents? There must be a dividing line in the application of Clause (7) and we should be able to decide where, the E.C. have not made the matter clear.

D'Arcy (E.C.) put a question to S.W. London branch. If for example, the I.L.P. held a Mass Meeting to ask for more time on the air would they be in favour of it?

Turner (E.C.). Once the Party started collaborating it loses its independence. He could quote many instances where we could collaborate - war, anti-fascism etc. We could equally collaborate in every case and we would finally not see the wood for the trees. It did not matter whether it was for a large or small issue - we should not risk our independence.

Lake (E.C.). We would do our case great harm because it meant having to advertise our collaboration. The hardest part of our propaganda was trying to convince the working-class that we were opposed to all other political parties. It would cloud an issue that we had to keep clear in the minds of the workers.

Hassett (S.W. London) in winding up said that the branch had not exaggerated the value of this kind of publicity. We could not know its value as we had never broadcast. What possible advertisement could the S.P.G.B. give to the I.L.P.? When our opponents asked us to collaborate, we could investigate their motives and there was nothing to stop us from turning it down afterwards. If the I.L.P. knew they were going to be allowed to broadcast on their anniversary, then there was no need to ask us for assistance. We collaborate with others when we help advertise a debate and there was no difference here.

Resolution - S.W. London (Hassett - Larkin).

"That this Conference deprecates the attitude of the E.C. to the I.L.P.'s request for joint action in petitioning the B.B.C., and considers they should have supported the proposition."

Lost 7 - 49.

Resolution - Flitter (Fulham - Mulheron (Glasgow)).

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to write to the B.B.C. in a further attempt to obtain time on the air."

Agreed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(E) St. Pancras.

"IS RULE 26 subject to abuse?"

Heelas (St. Pancras). The Rule had been the source of much controversy. It had been used in such a way as to conflict with Conference. Where Conference had given a decision, the matter should not be put to Party Poll. Conference could be placed in a position that any decision it comes to may be deferred pending such a Poll.

McLaughlin (E.C.). The Party Poll is the basis of the structure of this Party because the final arbiter is the Party itself.

Warnecke (Belling). The increase in the number of members and branches should be covered by increasing the number of branches required for a Party Poll. His branch was in favour of Party Polls but the Party should investigate the advisability of amending Rule 26 in view of the increase of the membership.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(F) Lewisham.

"Should Party Polls be used to alter existing Rules of the Party?"

Edmonds. All amendments to Rule should be dealt with by Conference. This particular item should have been discussed when Conference dealt with Rule 15.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(H) Camberwell

"Which is the final arbiter on Party policy - the Party Poll or Party Conference?"

Resolution - S.W. London (Hasset - Willatts).

"That in the opinion of this Conference a Party Poll is the final arbiter on all questions."

Carried 34 - 19.

Hasset (S.W. London). If his Rule book was any guide, it would seem that Conference and Delegate Meetings refer as final arbiter to the Party through the Party Poll.

Waters (Paddington). The Rule governing Party Poll was a safeguard, it kept a rein on the E.C., but we could not be in a position of having Conference action reversed within a short time by Party Poll; unless it is shown that the E.C. was not carrying out the decision of Conference, Party Poll should not be used.

Grant (St. Pancras). The Party Poll can be used to hold up activities, even though the Poll may uphold the views of Conference.

Baldwin (Camberwell). He was opposed to the resolution; Conference should be the final arbiter, the members came there to discuss; what was the point in having Conferences when the decisions could be overturned by Party Poll. Delegates were sent from all branches after full discussion. This was not possible with the Party Poll.

Lake (E.C.). Had it not been for one occasion when a majority of the Party demonstrated that they were not in agreement with a Conference decision, this question would not have arisen. We cannot lay down which will be final. The requirement of six branches is a safeguard against a frivolous calling for Party Polls.

McClatchie (E.C.) requested that the Conference carry this resolution. If it were not carried the result would be mis-interpreted. The control of the Party must be left in the hands of the membership.

Lee (Manchester). Central and provincial branch members could not attend Party meetings where decisions had been taken and had no say when such decisions were made. Therefore the Party Poll should be the final arbiter. Groves (E.C.). Party Polls do not give the greatest representation whereas Conference did.

Darcy (E.C.). Any power which the Party Poll has comes from Conference. Another Conference could amend this Conference decision as to which was the final arbiter.

Trotman (E.C.). Party Polls represent the majority of the Party. Everyone has the opportunity to vote. Branch attendances at special meetings to discuss Conference Agenda may be very small in proportion to the branch membership.

Hasset (S.W. London). The word 'final' means supreme. While conditions remained the same on any particular issue, the view expressed by Party Poll should have preference above a view held by Conference round about the same time.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(J) Camberwell.

"Can the E.C. amend Party Rules?"

Resolution - St. Pancras (Heelas-Grant).

"That this Conference censures the E.C.'s decision to raise the dues notwithstanding the result of the Party Poll on the matter which recorded an opinion but did not specifically amend Rules. Until this had been done, the E.C. had no right to alter the subscriptions."

Lost 8 - 37.

Heelas (St. Pancras). The question put in the Party Poll was 'should the subscriptions be increased' not should the Rule be amended. The E.C. had no power to amend Rules but had drawn branches' attention to the fact that they had done so. The E.C. had overstepped its powers in amending the Rule immediately.

Neenan (Hackney). St. Pancras were quibbling over a legal point, if they had taken the matter to a lawyer he probably would have found that the E.C. was out of order, but those members who were voting would know that an amendment to the Rule would follow.

Lee (Manchester). If a lawyer had been employed in the matter he could also have shown that the E.C. were quite in order.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

(I) Glasgow City.

"The question of providing an increase in the number of Agendas for Conference and Delegate Meetings."

It was agreed that the matter be referred to the Standing Orders Committee.

Resolution - Edmonds (Lewisham) - Warnecke (Ealing).

"That the Report of the Executive Committee be adopted."

Agreed.

Conference Adjourned at 5.20 p.m.

Collections - £21. 0. 0.